



Sixteenth Street Community Health Center

Health Center Part of \$500,000 New Program

Federal, state and local health officials have announced that a \$500,000 environmental health program is to be based at the Sixteenth Street Community Health Center, 1032 S. 16th Street in Milwaukee.

The program will be coordinated through the Sixteenth Street Community Health Center's Office of Environmental Health. Outreach workers will help identify potential environmental hazards in the neighborhood and provide families and residents with information that will enable them to take steps to reduce risk from environmental hazards.

"One of the objectives of the program is to help individuals and families learn how they can take control and personally manage some potential environmental health risks," said Paul Nannis, Milwaukee city health commissioner.

"Children are our primary concern and by providing information on potential problems within the community, we can guide parents to act responsibly in an effort to protect the children," added Nannis.

Our staff will have some of the latest resources available to help residents learn more about environmental hazards in their home and neighborhood," said John Bartkowski, Sixteenth Street Community Health Center chief executive officer.

"That includes computer technology, such as Internet, which will allow access to health and environmental hazard information from the EPA, Centers for Disease Control and other federal and state sources," he added.

The program includes major grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, as well as other grants from local foundations and in-kind services from a variety of government and community based agencies.

According to Nannis, this is among the first times an initiative of this type has been established at a community based clinic.

"People rely on Sixteenth Street for their health and social service needs and by serving as a catalyst to the community, we can only help enhance the quality of life," said Bartkowski.

"By directly communicating with residents, the Center will have the opportunity to identify those who are at greatest risk of environmental exposures," continued Bartkowski.

He gave examples of potential environmental hazards, hazardous waste sites, consumption of certain species of contaminated fish, air and water pollution, lead, asbestos, and pesticides.

"Through this project, our health and community outreach services are able to benefit the growing number of individuals and families we serve. We hope to offer residents of the community the capacity and the information they need to act on their own behalf" said Bartkowski.

A wider range of organizations are involved in this project. They include, Citizens for a Better Environment, Environmental Protection Agency, Milwaukee Department of City Development, Wisconsin Health and Social Services, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Sixteenth Street Community Health Center, Milwaukee Health Department, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Medical College of Wisconsin, and the Milwaukee Foundation.

Last year, nearly 33,000 patients visited the Sixteenth Street Community Health Center. Of those patients, 45 percent were under 11 years old.

Federal officials, including Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala, have cited the Sixteenth Street Community health center as a national model for providing quality, cost-effective care to a needy population. The center has been providing health care services to the community for more than 25 years.